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I find that I am also kept alive
because my husband & I recorded many
Counties of pre 1855 (when registration
started in Scotland) grave stones in
Scotland. & people were told of this
when I promoted the Comstock film in U.S.A.
Australia & N.Z. & elsewhere. & I get
queries from these countries frequently & try

to help if my eyes can read my
books & the other books I have of the
Forthish Record Society -

I am sorry my writing is so poor &
misspelt - but I can't see any more.

I am now 96. but if you come hunting
again this way - bring a camera & take
what you want from my scrapbooks.

Sincerely Yours

Shirley Maubett Mitchell

We had official photos taken at the Piceno & Malta -
& I have names of the officers & nurses - in them.

47 Couraught Mansions
Laura Place
Bath - BA24BP.

Dear Mr Liddle -

Thank you for your letter of
4.7.86 - asking me for my
memories of World War I - you
wrote me 10 years ago when I
had been taken by Jacques
Constantin under the waters of
the Belgian to see the wreck of
H.M.T.S. Britannic on which
I was working as an S.M.P.
attached to Queen Alexandra's
Nursing Service - I have my
scrapbook containing photos taken

during war I started with the
1st day when my brother was on a
sabbath holiday at St. Andrews &
I immediately went to London to
enlist & reached my mother's home
in Surrey in Uniform on his way
to be an interpreter in France
(where he worked as an engineer)
by the time he got to Southampton
they had collected men who knew
10 languages. So he was sent to meet
the 2/3 Gurkha Regt who were
landed at Marseilles - That same
1st day of the war I was in the Lake

district & boarded a train for
London which was crowded with
tramp like men who were being
called back to join the Army & Navy.
I started to cook for a hospital
near my mother's home where
the Public School Boys Battalion
arrived without uniforms had to
build their own camp & learn to
rivet-headers - I have photos of all
these things & the main road
into London barricaded with huge
Beer Barrels -
When the Govt asked the large London
Hospitals to teach G.I.s for 3 or 6 months

I went for 6 weeks to Bow to the
Training School for the London Hospital
after which I spent 6 months in the
wards - before lending myself to
Q.A.A.N.S. as a Special Military Prisoner
my 1st Army Hospital was at Bagthorpe
outside Nottingham where I was one
of the G.S.M.P. Nurses - until I had
orders to go to Serbia - One lot of
nurses had already gone there & told
us to take grey aprons as they were
washing in cold water in the trenches -
When I boarded H.M.H.S. Birkenhead
everyone in Serbia was on their way
out of that country - to the Adriatic so
I was kept on board ship as Staff
(I have a card from a relation who was on

a ship in the Adriatic ² & taken prisoner
by the Germans - but released as they
didn't fancy a load of wounded Serbs
with typhoid.

- We took a lot of nurses & doctors out to
Mudros where they continued their
journey to Bombay, Egypt & Malta
on the eight P & O & British India
ships which loaded us with 3000
British wounded & sick - which we took
back to Southampton in 6 1/2 days.

- (Vera Brittain wrote of this voyage in her
"Testament of Youth" as she was one
sent to Malta as a V.A.D.) -

The following voyage we had no such passengers
& were torpedoed off the Island of Crete
Only two men were killed by the explosion
but our casualties were caused by our
own propellers. The Captain was trying to

Save the ship & hoped to beach it
the far side of the Island - so
we were below high cliff when list -
The lifeboats were therefore only
launched from one side as the ship
was listing - and as soon as we
reached the water they were drawn
into the whirlpool caused by the
propellers. The two boats on either
side of the one I was in were cut into
ribbons. (If you saw Constance's
films "In Search of the Britannic"
or "Explorers of the deep" you will
have heard me telling him of this)
The ship sank in an hour & we
collected in the remaining lifeboats until
3 1/2 hours later when we were saved

by 2 English & one French destroyer.
I was picked up by HMS Scourge
& taken to the Admiral's ship
HMS Duncan which was in Salamis
Bay. I was luckily standing next
a nurse who found her cousin was
an officer on the Duncan & he kindly
sent my mother a cable "Saved"
otherwise my family were mixed up
in the Army & Navy & could get nothing in
the way of news - except the notices
of newspapers which said "Largest
Hospital Ship Sunk" -
The nurses were billeted in a 'Penny'
hotel at the Piers. I got a mattress
on the floor with 3 other nurses but -

never got to bed - as our casualties
(made by the propellers) had been
taken to the Russian Creek Hospital
(This was given by the Germans to
her son) None of the staff there
could speak English & we knew neither
Greek or Russian. but one nurse &
one of their Doctors spoke French
& as I had been an art student in
Paris. I had to work there every night
There were 40 French sailors there as
patients - who made me very welcome.
One night - the French found guns in
the Stadium at Athens - which showed
which side the Greeks were on - so we
took all our wounded to Malta where
we were billeted in different hospitals until

(3)
we could find boats to take us back to
Southampton - which we reached on
Boxing Day 1916.

On 27th January I had bought new
uniform caprons & was off to France
& went to No. 2 Stationary Hospital
W. Abbeville - out on the Doullens Road

Most of this hospital was in tents
& having to sleep in a Bell tent
in deep snow - was a bit of a change
after sharing a 1000 guinea cabin
on the White Star Luxury Ship -

There were two other hospitals
near us one S. African & the other
Australian - but as they were
General Hospitals they always had
1/2 days holidays & refused to take
patients if their beds were full -

I stayed at this hospital until March 1918 when the Armenians Push started. When our wounded were in the church & on the counter of the canteen - & I spent the night in Wellington took plunging through the mud to succour people in new tents & any place a man could lie - I nursed General Malcolm who said we were beaten - but I know that when I left I was singing "The Campbells are Coming" to show the Germans we were still alive & strong - we had to leave all our luggage but gradually got

things back - although our troops were breaking into canteens & our trucks! From there I work in the Casino & Hotel at Wincereux - until the war ended - We were badly bombed & had no glass in the windows of our billets - & I wish I still had a large piece of shrapnel which I wish I could give to my great grandsons - (they have pieces of coal which Constean found outside the wreck of the Pontauric) - When I spent a week with Constean & his drivers on 'Calypso' there was the President of the Titianiz Society

& he paid for all the photos of
the Britannic Adventure which
his Society printed in their
Titanic Commemorator of Fall 1977
& some of my photos also were
in 2 later numbers when Carstan
had seen the log books of the
British & French Admirals,
& the German Submarine.

There is a chance that these could
still be procured from U.S.A.
but they have all ~~the~~ films that
were made. I might-possibly
have given the Fall 1977 No to
my old School Polam Hall, at
Darlington as Miss Evelyn Thistlethwaite
of 88 Victoria Rd. Darlington put a lot

Spoken University & lectures at Edinburgh University
Bricelby 7ans Stella Macdeth Mitchell

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my eldest-daughter was in
the F.A.N.Y at Aldershot
& when an officer was Signals
Officer at Whitehall to Lord
Mountbatten & therefore knew
all the secret arrangements for
our different-landings in France
& Norway & Norway - I am
afraid all we have scrap
books which add to the family
archives -

I hope you have read one
of the more interesting World War
I Books - Starting in Belgium at start
of the war & then to Prussia - It is written

by a woman who shared a great
grandmother with me - Violetta
THURSTAN" She died a few years
ago aged 99 - "The Hounds of War
Unleashed" It is out of print
& I was only lucky to get me through
her housekeeper - It was printed
by UNITED WRITERS Publications
TREVAIL MILL, ZENNOR. S^t. Ives
CORNWALL.

● She later went to Serbia and
after War II wrote a novel (True
Story of what she was doing in a
Camp of refugees in Klagensfurt
Called "The Foolish Virgin"
Published by Wordens of Cornwall Ltd -

at Marazion - Cornwall - This was
interesting to me as she was in
Austria when my husband & I
were in Vienna with the Finance
Dept. of the Control Commission
& if I had known we could have
met her -

I hope you have "The Quality of Mercy"
by Monica Kippner - it is quite the
best book on Serbia during World War I
I hope you can read my writing - I
am now 96 and have cataracts
so I cannot see what I am writing.
I am sorry to be of so little help.
If ever you collect War II information
my son has one or two interesting
letters he sent me in his scrapbook -
He was lately Sec of Education, Edinburgh but
now retired & lives at 20 Regent Terrace

Edinburgh EH7 called Anna

my daughter tells me I ought to have told you the
nurses I tell her off. She was a trained nurse
I only learnt at the London for six months & was
only intended to care for wounded & sick troops -
when working at the Russian Field Hospital at the
Poles. I was the only one to speak French I was
told "you are in charge here" - (which was embarrassing
as the others were our asst. Matron & other trained nurses)
All the operations & dressing were done after midnight
at the Hospital as it was cooler then - One night
our Sisters thought it imperative that a man had
a saline injection to save his life & I continually
sent for the French speaking surgeon - who was very
irate & came saying "What use is this when
the man is dying" - When I told him Britishers
never gave up so easily as that - he gave the saline
When I got on duty the next night the surgeon was
there & gave 23 of our men this injection - Was
it because he was amazed at the condition of
the dying man (who didn't die - & the last I saw
of him was in a Hospital at Malta - where we
had all been evacuated) or was it because by giving
this treatment to all our wounded I wouldn't wake
him up early in future?
When the Britannic was torpedoed we fortunately
had no patients on board otherwise I probably
wouldn't be writing to you now - but the ^{previous} return
voyage from Mudros to Southampton was really
dreadful - I was on night duty with one young
Sister & several orderlies in one huge ward
of swing cots & two other wards of 2 tier
bunks which were reached by a ladderlike
staircase under water level - We had such a
storm in the Bay of Biscay we were battered down

for 4 1/2 days & as the ballast shifted there was such a list on the ship it was nearly necessary to go down the back of the staircase -

Sister spent each night being sick in the upstairs bathroom. but I went my rounds on each hour & then came back for five minutes to be sick - Going up the Channel I saw a

floating mine pass us - & it reminded me that two of our medical officers had recently been on the Galesa in the Channel when it was mined -

In France I was also usually on night duty & often found myself "wishing someone would come" - I usually had two large magazines of 31 beds - one completely

surgical & probably full of beds with fractured femurs hung above them & the other might have medical cases - I

can remember several nasty occasions

One was when an officers tent was set alight in the adjoining S. African Hospital & not knowing who was doing this the Camp had to be guarded by men in couples. All the fire buckets were frozen up & useless & the tents quite close together & our instructions were to let the tent ropes down after putting blankets over the men with legs hung from beams - as if there was a wind the

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flames would run along the rows of tents -
Fortunately the culprit was found after a week
of this hanging over us -

Another night I hated was when 3 cases
of pneumonia were to "crisis, lysis or collapse"
the same night - and I had never nursed
a pneumonia case before - & penicillin
had not been invented -

BUT the worst. Time I remember was when we
have 3 terrific Thunder storms in one week.
The 1st storm killed a guard who was
cleaning his rifle - & unfortunately we were told
to see his body in the mortuary - as there
was a photo of a branch of a tree on him -
I wished I hadn't seen this when I had
to go from one of my messengers to the other
the lights had all fused - & the lightning
rattling around the fuel barrels & duck boards
outside - but I had to see both tents
& it was as well I went - as I found a
very mad man roaming out of his bed
& another had his arm hanging out of his bed.

After the Germans pushed us back to the coast
we only had bombing - but what distressed
me most then was when a specially bad case
which I got within hopes of being returned to
Blighty was hit & I had to escort his wife to his
funeral when I think we were only burying 30 new

I once got leave from France with another S. trip who had been with me at Baginbago on the Britannic & luckily I therefore was away when orders came for us to go to Genoa - to a hospital which was more like a convalescent home. I was always glad we missed going there & that we remained in France where our work was worth while -

● After the war I occasionally came up on the nurses & patients I had nursed - the most amusing was when I went to dinner party in India & said to the man sitting next me - "I have met you before." he answered "It was probably at the Club" but as I had never been to the Club being a newcomer to Allahabad - I looked at his name on the table before him - & when I saw "Warren" I remembered where I had met him and the dinner table embarrassed him as I said "I was giving you a bath" —!!

● Another memory in France was seeing the first tanks before they were used - at Amiens - the Boche. My Constan's reunion has brought back many old friends who had been lost. Only two of them are now still alive - but their children call bring me life when I remember my adventures with their parents - I have lists of officers I nursed & their regiments - if you want

This is a fairly full transcription of the tape but is not a complete record of every word spoken.

MITCHELL, MRS. Sheila MacBeith

W.W.1 and before.

926

.....interview on the 6th June 1992 with Sheila MacBeith Mitchell regarding her experiences of the sinking of the "Britannic" in 1916. She is soon to reach 102 years of age.

The thing that interests me is that I don't hear words that begin with consonants. If they begin with a vowel I can hear them. I can't think why. If a word begins with 'ch' I don't hear the 'ch' at all, I don't even know it is there.

Tell us what is the secret of your long life, because you're wonderful.

Nothing really, except that I have never been idle until I came here and now I am terrible this last couple of months because I am perfectly content to keep my eyes shut. You see I am nearly blind. I can see the left side of your face and not the right. You see, that sort of thing. But I can't taste much, which is galling and they liquidise my dinner. My supper's always soup because I can drink it, and this woman today has brought me bananas because I love them. I shall only be able to feel that they are bananas and know I love them.

Isn't the memory a wonderful thing though, you see.

Look, I mustn't waste your time if you want to know about the First War.

Can we ask you a couple of questions to start with?

Just a minute. Mr. Liddle you say. I think my daughter-in-law....(table is moved nearer)...my daughter-in-law I believe has given him a copy of her mother's diary of the First War. She was a V.A.D. in France, but in a French Hospital - I think *Royaumont* I am not certain, but I think it is *Royaumont* which was offered to the British by Dr. Elsie *Engels*, but the Army Medical people in England had never had lady doctors so they refused to have them, so Elsie Engels took her ladies and hospital and offered them to France, and they went to *Royaumont* and that is how my daughter-in-law's mother got with them.

Now she didn't do as I did. Very soon after the First War started I read in 'The Times' there were so many wounded coming from France there wouldn't be enough nurses and they wanted the big Hospitals in London, instead of training us for four years and keeping us there, we paid them to be allowed to be trained for six months, you see. Normally if I had been going to be a nurse I would have been given £15 a year and a uniform. As it was, I paid them 60 guineas and went there for six weeks to the Training School from the London Hospital in Whitechapel, in Bow, and then I went into the London Hospital for six months and lent myself to Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service, as what they called a Special Military Probationer. My brother said "simple, modest, person".

Well, anyway, there weren't many of us who did this and

for a year I worked in a Military Hospital outside Nottingham, Bagthorpe. Then one day six of us who had been trained as I was in a London Hospital were told to go to Southampton on a certain Sunday to go to Serbia. Well, one lot of nurses had already gone to Serbia and they wrote and said "we are washing out white aprons in cold water in the trenches - get some grey ones". So we had grey ones made. However, at the last minute they found that the Serbs were being chased out of Serbia over the hills to the Adriatic and so we wouldn't be able to land and we were kept on the "Britannic's" staff and so I sailed two voyages on the "Britannic" from Southampton to Moudros and the second one we didn't get to Moudros because we were torpedoed. Is it Dr. Liddle, or Mr?

I think it is Dr. Liddle.

Well, I heard that he was wanting to write about the First War.

That's it.

Well now, does he only want about nurses or only want about ships, or what? Just anything?

He specifically requested that you discuss in detail the sinking of the "Brittanica".

The "Brittanica".

The "Brittanica" - I beg your pardon.

(Here there is a telephone call for Mrs. Mitchell from her son and the recorder is switched off).

He only wants about the "Brittanica" does he?

The fullest detail that you can recall of the "Brittanica's" sinking, and if you can give us a brief outline on your...a little bit about your schooling and your youth, and the influences on your life in your youth. The social, and religious, and political, and educational.

I see. Well look, I will slip in before what I told you about being called up.

I was the eighth of nine children. Scots blood, living in Lancashire, and in those days it was quite unusual to go to Boarding School. My elder sisters, 14 or 15 years older, never went to a Boarding School. I don't know whether you are Quakers either of you?

No.

I went to a Quaker School outside Darlington, Hall, and I am one year older than the school, which had it's Centenary last year. It had been a school in Kendal before, but it had only gone to Darlington the year after I was born. In those days you didn't do as my children did and go to a Boarding School at about 13, you went at 15 and from 15 - 18 I was there and having, I thought, learnt all I needed at a Dame School I only listened to lessons that interested me, which was mostly Greek Art and those sort of things. I could draw the Parthenon and these places, never dreaming that in time that I was going to be torpedoed on the "Brittanica" and get there. However, I left school and then went to Paris for a year, and one of my sisters, who had been an art student in Glasgow, came

with me and we lived with musicians to do with the Conservatoire. Yvonne Gallier taught Isidore Philippe's pupils and years later her daughter, Monique you can buy records of, came to Edinburgh at the Festival and stayed with me. But I lived in Paris at a very interesting time when there were very good artists. I mean, it was in the days of Gauguin and the Sunflower man, you know.

Van Gogh.

Van Gogh - and the person I liked best was the sculptor who did the "Burghers of Calais" but it wasn't the "Burghers of Calais" I loved, it was the girl's head - about that size - and another one of two hands.

Anyway I lived in Paris at a very interesting time and was very lucky because the family we lived with didn't speak English and at the weekends my third brother was an engineer in France, and his headquarters were at the British Club in Paris and he laid out the first French Golf Course near Versailles and every weekend my sister and I used to go and play golf there, you see, and met Englishmen and went to posh restaurants. However, we used to take my brother - he said if I didn't tell his friends he'd like to come with us - to the Latin Quarter and we took him to little, what we called "Croquet classes". You could pay about 50 centimes and there was a little railing, a semi-circle of people and four poses of a model and you could be good at it or not. One day I had a very good artist sitting next to me drawing in red crayons and things, but anyway we took my brother there because we are a family who has had artists in it for generations and he was not the kind to go just to see somebody with no clothes on, if you understand what I mean. I personally thought that the first pose with clothes on, and the last with none, were decent. It was the halfway ones that were not decent. But anyway we enjoyed it.

Then when I got home to England my father had retired. He ran a place where they made machinery for cotton mills in Lancashire. Can't think of its name now. Not factory - what is it?

A mill?

No, a works. They made the machinery.

A foundry.

A foundry, that's it. I am sorry - I can be 102!

Anyway he'd just retired and we went to live in Surrey. This was in '99 and I very much wanted to do something and when I was at school, as I say, I spent most of my time in the studio. I loved having girls of my own age and playing games. We used, every Saturday we'd be in Hexham, or Harrogate, or York, playing lacrosse or hockey or something and my father, in those days thought that it was a disgrace to him if his daughters earned their own living and he wouldn't let me go and train for anything, so I wasn't allowed to go to be a gymn mistress or games mistress and I said "all right, let me go to be a gardener and lady gardeners were very new and

he said "oh, you can garden at home". Well, I'd got a sister 14 years older, very keen on a garden and there were two paid gardeners. That was no good. I got the credit for nothing. However, I enjoyed myself, because I belonged to the Ladies' Golf Union and the sister who'd been with me in Paris had been a runner-up in the Golf Championship when she was 13 and had played for Scotland, Lancashire 13 and Scotland from 15 onwards and we used to play really good Golf, but there wasn't much of it in those days, if you understand what I mean. However, I enjoyed it and I looked after my mother's parties and tennis and things like that.

Then one day the War was declared. Well I was up with my elder sister in the Lake District and in my scrapbook I can show you photographs of my brother from France, the first day of the First War, he borrowed a soldier's...

Hat?

Scotch cap, I can't think of it's name at the moment, and then there is a photograph of him when he got to Carlisle and there is a milestone with a notice calling up all the old soldiers and sailors to come and fight again, and there is a picture of him in the barracks there. By the time he got to London, I have got a photograph of the street into London, barricaded up with huge, I don't know whether you'd call them beer barrels, they'd be as high as that window, and only one car at a time was allowed into London. This is the first day of the First War, you see. He went straight to the War Office and he came down to Surrey to my mother's, within 24 hours, in khaki, and he was on his way to Southampton to join the Interpreter Corps but by the time he got to Southampton his perfect French was nothing - there were people there who could speak ten languages and so he stayed in France and he was made into an officer with the 3rd Gurkha Regiment, who'd come from India to France and he used to see that their meat was killed in the proper fashion and....anyway he was an officer in the 3rd Gurkha Regiment.

But as he went through Mother's to go to Southampton I have a photograph of me, not knowing that I was later going to nurse, putting his puttees on. This was my first attempt at bandaging, you see, but that photograph is in there. But the photos, for instance, calling up the soldiers, and the beer barrels barricading the street in London, are really First Day of the First War pictures, you see.

I have also then got, I will just tell you about them and show you them later, I have got a photograph of a lot of young men in civilian clothes and in front of them there are blankets and inspection of their kit. Well, this was what we call the Public Schools Battalion. Boys from the Public Schools volunteered. There wasn't any khaki for them and there weren't any khaki blankets. They took mothers' pink ones and white ones and whatever there was and one of my photographs is at Goodwood Racecourse with all these things in front of them. Well, these things are in front of them at the

inspection and in the background you will see a most lovely painting by one of these boys, who was an artist on the "Daily Graphic" or something like that. Anyway I have got these photographs.

Well then some of this Battalion went to Surrey and started to build a camp above my mother's house and the first lot who got there used to come to us and we always gave them a bathroom at night, if they wanted to come and have a bath, and some of them got into the Drawing Room, you know, and some didn't. We always put newspapers and magazines for them in a certain room every night and the photographs of that camp were very interesting to Jacques Cousteau when I went to him over 60 years later.

I don't know if you know that Cousteau found the "Brittanic" wreck? Well, when I went to him and showed him my scrapbook that I am telling you about he was very interested because he saw pictures in this camp of trenches, when they were learning how to erect trenches before they went to France. You see he was interested because his own father and grandfather were French soldiers then. I am getting out of date...

Well, anyway, I have these photos of this camp. Well, they turned a house near mother's into a Hospital for the Camp and I went to cook for them. There was a cracked oven. However I used to send soldiers down with joints of meat to mother's oven and cook a lot down there and one day I sprained my ankle and while I was recovering from that I read 'The Times' asking the Hospitals in London to take people like me for six months in the Hospitals, so that all the wounded coming from France would have somebody to look after them. Well, after my six months there I was a Special Probationer to Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service, and I was sent to Nottingham and worked there for a year in what had been a workhouse and....oh, it was a terrible place. At night when you went into the kitchen to turn on the tap it was covered in cockroaches, you know. I didn't like that part at all - however..

Then, as I told you, a few minutes ago we got orders to go to Serbia and so I got to Southampton and found that I was told that although I had a camp bed and a canvas bath and my grey aprons and things for Serbia, I was going to be kept on the "Brittanic" until it was possible for us to land. Well, we never did land. As a matter of fact we wouldn't have been able to later, because I also have in my scrapbook postcards of the First War that were sent to a Dr. MacMatthew of Oxford, who was then a little boy, and his aunt was a nurse in Serbia and she escaped from Serbia with the patients, to the Adriatic. But the Germans took them prisoner on a boat, but let them go because they had got, I've forgotten, something very infectious and the Germans didn't want them, so they got away, but I've got that photograph also in my scrapbook about the First War. Another of his aunts gave me a postcard that she sent this boy,

which was taken at Victoria Station at Christmastime when she used to supply canteen and things to people - soldiers who were going backwards and forwards to France.

This is merely telling you that I have these photographs of the First War in my book.

Well then after a year I went on the "Britannic" for the last two voyages it made. I think it made about 4 or 5 altogether and the first one we went to Moudros, where 8 P & O or British..big ships, came and gave us patients, who had been wounded at Gallipoli, but they had been in hospitals in Malta, Alexandria, and even some of them had come from Bombay, I think. So they weren't violently ill by that time. They were people who were recovering, but we used to take over 3,000 patients back to Southampton from Moudros, in six and a half days. Well, that particular voyage was terribly stormy. I was on night duty with a Sister who spent the night in a bathroom being sick, and we had three different Wards, no, four different wards on three different floors. The top one was frame cots and the bottom ones the men were more or less beginning to be convalescent, you know, in bunk beds. But I used to go round at night in this storm and I'd go round at midnight and then come back and be sick for 5 minutes and then start again. I was not a good sailor ever. I mean, if I went across the Channel I'd feel sick the minute the engine started, if I smelt the oil or anything, but when you're having to nurse a man and having to think about him you forget about being sick, which Sister didn't do. However, we had a very, very stormy voyage.

Well then the next voyage we went out again and we used to call in at Gibraltar and we always went to Naples to get coal, and we had two days - they allowed us to go on shore at Naples while they took on coal, vegetables and water and things. Then we used to get to Moudros, way up past Athens, you know. You know where it is, in the Dardanelles. We used as a rule, to get there at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and begin taking on patients straight away. Well, of course, that last voyage, at 8 minutes past 8 in the morning of the day we should have got to Moudros, a torpedo got us, off the island of ?Kea. I've got quite a lot of books and things in here that tell you what happened there and about the way they couldn't launch my lifeboat because some men had gone off with a boat that they shouldn't have done and had to come back, and how the lifeboats on either side of me, that went down, were cut into ribbons because the Captain was trying to beach our ship round our island and the propellers were coming up at the back, you see. Very fortunately while one of these lifeboats was being cut - I had learnt to row on Windermere Lake after perch - and with the help of a stoker who didn't know how to row and other people we got our boat away safely. But the next lifeboat to us on the other side of us was cut to pieces.

Well, then, an hour after we were hit, the "Britannic" went down and all the lifeboats that had been saved collected

and when there were no more explosions from the "Britannic" that had gone under the water, we went back and began picking up the people in the water. You see many had had to jump in or they'd been in lifeboats that were cut to pieces and after three and a half hours we saw smoke, and three ships came in answer to our S.O.S.

Well, I not only know about what happened then but 60 years later when Jacques Cousteau found the wreck under the sea and advertised for a survivor, I got in a plane in Edinburgh to London and on to Athens, where he met me with his private helicopter and I'd never been on one before, and at 10 o'clock at night I got on to that little ship there - the "Calypso" with Cousteau. Well, I was 86 years old and I'd had a lot of lovely food on the plane and I was very sick and the following day I lost my voice and I didn't know that he wanted to make a film. So I spent a week on that boat with Cousteau and the divers until my voice came back and inside, with these books that he has given me, all these books which have lovely things written in them, how he admired me for going down. He took me on that boat - you will see a little thing at the back on the crane - well I went down in that for an hour, right inside of the wreck 60 fathoms below and I was very lucky, very exciting. I came to life at 86!

I shouldn't be telling you this story now should I, it's 60 years too far ahead.

Well, let me tell you - the reason I was telling you was that then the ship that picked me up out of the lifeboat after the "Britannic" went down, 60 years later I have a letter in a later scrapbook from an officer from that and he said that he went down to breakfast on his ship and found that the sun was coming in on the wrong side through the porthole and when he went to enquire why, they were answering our S.O.S. because the "Britannic" was going down.

Well, I've got a later scrapbook with all kinds of things from people who were on ships 60 years before, but it is rather difficult to tell you about them, you see, in the right order. Well, anyway, I will go back to where I was.

I was picked up by the "Scourge" and I spent the day sitting on that and we towed behind us a whole lot of empty lifeboats which the people who'd been saved had been in and they all broke away, except two, Nos. 13 and 15, and 13 and 15 have been my lucky numbers ever since, but I've never won a raffle.

You see, when I lived at home, the Post Office, when we went to live in Surrey, wrote and congratulated us because they offered us No. 13 as a telephone number and everybody had refused it before and we took it, and that had been my lucky number. But when we went on the "Britannic" my friend, who shared a cabin with me, was given No. 13 as her identity number, that is the wrong word I've got, and I was given No. 15 and we were in Cabin No. 15. So that's how those two numbers have been waiting to be lucky. I don't know whether they will

be - anyway...I spent the day on the "Scourge" and I think the other one that came, a British..I can't remember the name of this Naval vessel for the moment, begins with a 'C'..the other was called the "Heroic" and there was a French ship came to save us, too. They took us to Piraeus and if ever you hear what Cousteau sells as, what is the thing that you put on the Television picture?

A video?

I've got one in there with the books. Cousteau sells them at about £18 each and this is because 60 years later, when I lived on his ship I took my scrapbook with me and I took a bit of a chair off the "Britannic" that I'd picked out of the water when I was there and all this was photographed and put on to this thing that is sold in America at £18 a time. Well, he sent me one and we have had them copied so all my grandchildren and my children have got one each, you see. If you'd been here tomorrow, staying in Bath, and had the right thing to put it on my Television you could put it on there now. I don't know how to do it because I've been blind ever since these things existed. But anyway, it exists, and the first time Cousteau's film was shown in Britain, it was called "In Search of the Britannic" and a year later it came to Bath when I came to live here and it was then called "Explorers of the Deep", but it was the same film.

I was very unlucky in a way in that the Atlantic Rich Field Oil Company in America gave me the whole of that Film complete, but unfortunately I let the Navy people show it in Bath and the man who put it on the screen took so many pieces off it to make himself a film that it's not as good as it used to be, but anyway my Grandson has got the original, but there again that Naval Officer, when he gave me back my Film didn't give it to me in the case which said "This is the film from America from the Atlantic Rich Field Oil Co. given to Mrs. Mitchell" - do you see.

However, well now let me go back to the 21st November 1916. The "Scourge" took me to the Admiral's ship at the Piraeus which was called the "Duncan" and when we got there I was standing next to a nurse I didn't know and up walked one of the "Duncan's" officers who was her cousin and he said to her "I'll try and let your parents know you're safe" and he took my mother's address. So very fortunately, when my sister in London, from a bus, saw a notice "Largest Hospital Ship Sunk" and bought the paper they rang the War Office and the Admiralty and couldn't get anything. This man, radio officer at the Piraeus had sent a cable home.

Well, now, my mother was living in the country and didn't even know the ship had gone down. There was no newspaper in the village, but my sisters and brothers were ringing her up and in the middle of the conversation the woman at the Post Office said "excuse me, there's a cable here from Greece, saying 'saved' and that....

HERE SIDE 'A' COMES TO AN ABRUPT END.

N.B. Some of the 'B' side of the Tape is precised.

MITCHELL, MRS. Sheila MacBeith

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Mrs. Mitchell here describes her trip to the United States sponsored by the Atlantic Rich Field Oil Co. and KTET, which is apparently a Film company of Los Angeles. For eight weeks she travelled all round the U.S.A. staying at the best hotels, and making appearances of various kinds.

The interviewer then asked: "Could you spend some time telling us exactly what you were doing when the Britannic" started to sink, when it was torpedoed? What your duties were when it was happening? Do you recall...?"

Well, of course it's been...if Mr. Liddle asks my son, he's got a little - this thing called "Time to talk" in England, after I'd been to Cousteau for instance, and on that, the beginning of it, was a woman of 101, who was in hospital outside Edinburgh and she'd been on the "Titanic"and here Mrs. Mitchell relates the story of the lady from the wreck of the "Titanic".

It would appear that two Americans have written a book about Liners that had 'happenings' and Chapter 12 is about the "Britannic" and contains some photographs of Mrs. Mitchell and of some of her things saved from the ship. She thinks the book is called "Fallen Stars". She has never had it read to her. She gave her daughter a copy but it only contains one paragraph about her. These men were, apparently, going to print another book in Yeovil about the "Britannic" only, as they took so much copy out of her scrapbook.

Mrs. Mitchell seemed to think that Mr. Liddle would know about all that. One of the young men was called 'Charles Haas' and he has corresponded with Mrs. Mitchell regarding his trips to Germany since the Wall came down, in order to find his roots in East Germany. These two young men had apparently spent a whole day in her flat and when proposing to call again she put them off and sent them instead to a Museum in Southampton where the curator, Alistair Forsyth, knows her. She mentions here a family called Cathcart, who knew she had been shipwrecked in the "Britannia". There are photos of the Scrapbook in the Town Hall Museum at Southampton.

She mentions letters from Mr. Peter Liddle.

She was able to tell the Commentator on the Cousteau expedition that there was no organ on the staircase, after he had asked the divers to find it, because she had a photograph of her nurses on the staircase.

There were photographs in her scrapbook of V.A.D.s who, after being torpedoed were allowed to go sightseeing in Athens. But Mrs. Mitchell wasn't allowed to go and never got to the Parthenon because after being on the "Duncan" for tea and sending the cable to her mother, they were taken to an empty hotel on the mainland which was shut up, more or less completely, for the winter. The nurses were told they could go into any room they liked, which only had mattresses on the floor, and just as Mrs. Mitchell was going to bed someone at the door asked if McBeith was in there. The Matron evidently knew

that she had lived in France and there were 23 badly wounded men, who had been wounded leaving the "Britannic" and who were taken to the Piraeus to a little Hospital, which had been given by the Tzarina (who was either mother or grandmother of the King of Greece). None of the Doctors or nurses there could speak English, but two, one Doctor and one Nurse, could speak French, so all the time Mrs. Mitchell was there she had to be on night duty with the one doctor and one nurse who spoke French. They were doing all the operations at night because the weather was so hot during the day.

Mrs. Mitchell did get a sightseeing tour with a man whose sister had given a big reception to the medical staff (to which Mrs. Mitchell had been unable to go as she was in bed). He apparently knew all the taxidivers as they had been in his Regiment (? during the Greek Civil War?). She saw the King and Queen of Greece who were shut up in their own Gardens by the French and British and Mrs. Mitchell says that recently from Talking Books she has learned from a book called "Princess Marina" that she was six years old at that time and her uncle was the King of Greece. Princess Marina says that when the British left and went to Malta, about one or two days later the French and the British Fleets, the "Duncan" and the French ships shelled the Palace in Athens and Princess Marina was there as a little girl of 6.

Mrs. Mitchell now tells how Guns had been found in the Stadium and they (presumably the British and French) had decided that the Greeks were therefore on the side of Germany and so Mrs. Mitchell has in her scrapbook pictures of all the nurses etc. being put on to a ship - the name of which she cannot at that moment remember - and taken off to Malta. Because they were at sea she didn't, of course, know, about the shelling of the Royal Palace. She only learnt about that by reading the Talking Book about 6 or 12 months ago.

"Well, I came off duty that morning and I have photographs in my scrapbook of us sitting waiting to get on to this ship to go to Malta and each one of us had been given a big length of material which we made into a sack about the size of this table and if you got a pair of shoes from an orphanage, where things had been sent from America for Greek children - you see we'd lost all our clothes. I'd had to tear up my petticoats and everything. I only had a pair of knickers and my cotton dress left because I'd torn them up to tie up our people we'd picked from the water and picked up bits of wood that were floating in the water when the ship went down, to make splints for the men that we took to the Hospital which I nursed at night. I think I was the only untrained nurse that went to the Hospital with the Greek and French speaking - with the English speaking - Doctor and Nurse. The assistant Matron came and two other trained nurses. None of the VADs went, because they weren't trained nurses. But I was there, I had to work on night duty all the time I was there. But it was very interesting.

Now we went from there to Malta and hung around. The Doctors got home quicker than we did because they'd go one or two at a time on different ships and looked after themselves and got to Marseilles and overland and got to England. But the nurses had to wait until there was a French...it wasn't ait was a terrible ship - I was sleeping in a bunk which had pipes and things going above my head that rats used to run along in the night.

Well, it was a French ship of sorts. But I got home to Southampton on Boxing Day and was allowed to go home and was asked to give a list of what I had lost on the boat. Well, of course, I'd lost more than most people because I had all my kit to go to Serbia, but the reply came, the maximum compensation for a V.A.D. is £12.7s.6d or something like that. It didn't much matter, because it wasn't going to buy me enough aprons to work with anyway.

Well, by the 27th of January, I have photographs in the same scrapbook, I arrived in France at No. 2 Stationary Hospital outside Abbeville on the Doullens road, and I was there from 27th January 1917 until the Amiens push in March I think it was, I cannot remember the exact date, when the Germans chased us out to the coast and I went from there to Wimereux where we were very, very badly bombed and I went on there till the end of the War and at the very end, we knew we were going to win, but ever so many were dying of...what is the thing you get every year, I am now inoculated...

Flu?

Flu. Do you remember? They all died of Flu. The nurses and doctors were just dropping down dead every day. It was dreadful. But that ended that war.

Well now, you see, I waited then, I suppose, for 60 years, and one day I saw in 'The Times' and the 'Scotsman' a notice to say Jacques Cousteau and his divers had been working for the Greek Government for 18 months in the Mediterranean finding on films you have probably seen - one is Oil Jars under the water, and after he'd found my ship, which was very modern, he found another one which had all kinds of wonderful marble statues, Greek things, which had gone down under the water, but it was really being stolen by the Romans and went down.

Int: Mrs Mitchell. What were the supplies like when you were on the, did you say Piraeus? for food, and what were the medical supplies like when they picked you up? Did you have to make do with whatever you could get your hands on?

Well, I went downwe were told when we were hit..we were at breakfast when we were hit with the torpedo. There was a couple of bangs and we jumped up and somebody shouted out "Sit down and wait until the sirens go." We knew something had happened. Well, we'd always been taught that if anything happened we were to go to our cabins and get a lifebelt and a blanket - I think it might have been a pillow - but I know it was a lifebelt and a blanket, and go up to the boat deck ready to get into lifeboats and we used to have this boat drill when

we were going out.

Well, as I used to be on night duty and two of my Wards were under the water level anyway, if we were going to have a practice I used to go down there, because I knew it was the most difficult place to get out of and the orderlies were supposed to take the patients. Is this....

HERE THERE IS A BREAK IN THE TAPE - POSSIBLY WHEN SOMEONE ENTERED THE ROOM.

..."Scourge". Well, before I was picked up by the "Scourge"..

Int: Drill practice.

...I went up on to the deck and I got into a lifeboat and because some of the Stokers had gone off in a Lifeboat - there were only a few men when they should have many more - they were ordered to come back and we were kept hanging from the Ship and not launched. We were bigger than the "Titanic" you see, our ship. They had to talk to us through megaphones from the top. Well, my brother had been taking guns out to America to be copied and had had a G-waistcoat (?) so when I went to my cabin.....by the way, when I used to have a practice I never got there because the man who was to shut the watertight doors was there before me and I couldn't get to my cabin unless I went to the boat deck and went down, which I refused to do, because the people were pouring up, and so whenever there were practices, they always used to keep me behind and show me how I could have got to my cabin, and I said "well I'm not going down when people are trying to get up and you've got 25 lifebelts on the deck and you can give me one of those". Well, the day we were hit I went to my cabin and I got my lifebelt on me and my brother had given me a G-waistcoat which I always blew up the night we went round Cape Matapan because I felt there were too many hidey holes. I was expecting to be torpedoed and I lent that to one of my orderlies up on the deck who was there without a belt. Well, fortunately he wasn't drowned and I got it back again and later that G-waistcoat went up to France with my eldest brother who'd come over from America.

Well, when I got down to the water they shouted down and said "are the little trap doors shut?" There was a little brass thing, so that if on the deck the rain got in, it drained away. Well, by the time we got these shut we were standing in about a foot of water and busy rowing - anything to get away from the ship before she went down, which we managed. Well, when the lifeboat, she had gone down, and the lifeboats all began to collect and before anybody had come in answer to our S.O.S., one man with a sense of humour saw a notice floating on the water. The Matron had been in the South African War and she was very old-fashioned and she used to put a rope across decks and saying "Sisters only", "Patients only". She didn't approve of finding a nurse and doctor holding hands on the Boat Deck you see. Anyway, one of these notices went by and matron was only a few yards from me and this man saw the notice and he

shouted out "I'm surprised the old Dame didn't put a notice to say that Doctors and Nurses shouldn't drown on the same side of the ship". Although we'd just seen a Ship go down and it was all very moving, I'm afraid you couldn't help but laugh.

By the time I got on to the "Scourge" we went into an Island - I didn't know the name of the Port until 3 weeks ago, when the young man from Southampton, you know who I mean, who is at the Museum at Southampton. He is very kind. Well, when I went to America and the Titanic Commutator (?) had photographed some of my scrapbook and all the nurses up at the Parthenon and that sort of thing, they made an enormous book that is in there called "The Titanic Commutator for 1977". I think that's it. I was 87 then and I am sure Mr. Liddle should have seen it. If he hasn't my son's got a copy and also a fortnight ago my son came to see me and he's gone off with things that the young man from Southampton has just sent me, because the "Titanic" man himself is dead, but the people there have reprinted that for '77 and they've added to it the telling about the "Titanic" being hit and the launching of the lifeboats by a man who was one of the ship's officers. I don't know his name. His grandson, I think, is called Grimm or something like that. He sent it to them and they've reprinted mine, I gather, with his and another one which is from a Scotch Doctor called Beaumont, I think it was, and that man answered the S.O.S. on a ship when the "Titanic" went down and then later he went two voyages from Southampton to the Dardanelles but before I was on it and he wasn't on it when we were torpedoed.

Well, these two, I think, have both been added to the reprint of my '77 Fall thing and the young man, I wrote and said thank you to the man in Southampton, because they used to send me the "Titanic" magazine every time it came out, but they haven't done it for some time because they think I've been dead a long time ago, so I haven't had one. He has sent me a copy of what he's got and I showed it to my son when he came on the 15th of last month and he was so interested that he has taken those away to copy them and his wife has told Mr. Liddle about them. I don't think she's sent him those, unless my son copied it straight away and sent it to him. But if he hasn't got a copy my son's got it and I have nothing for the moment.

Well now, when I wrote saying thank you for sending me about the Scotch Doctor, the young man at Southampton is extremely kind keeping me interested in things, because this man said he was born in India and I said I was very interested in your Scotch Doctor, but I am sorry he didn't say where he was born in India, because I lived there for 14 years, you see. I was married to a man in the Indian Civil Service. So a week ago, there on the table, he sent another letter out of a book he's got in Southampton. I don't know what it is called - he may tell you in this letter that's lying on the trolley - and he has sent there what interests me enormously.

The Scotch Doctor tells you he is born in India and his parents are missionaries. He tells you where he is educated in Dumfries and in the Edinburgh High School. He was trained to be a Doctor in Edinburgh and he went to visit a Dr. Gordon at East Lynton outside Edinburgh.

Here, Mrs. Mitchell says, he got his first job as a Locum and enlarges on his experiences which include meeting a Mr. E.J. ? (name Mrs. M. cannot remember) who was a famous politician. She recalls that at some time she had spoken to him on the telephone, perhaps with regard to Scottish Graves.

Mrs. Mitchell again mentions Alastair Forsyth who lives in Sevenoaks and who seems to have written the letter about the Doctor who was on the "Britannic" and again she bemoans the fact that she was not told where in India the Doctor was born.

Mrs. Mitchell now mentions her ancestors, originally from Ireland, who moved to three Scottish Islands. Their names were McBeith, Beeton and Bethune. They became Doctors. She develops this subject and talks of a Norman Bethune from Australia.

THE TAPE ENDS.

(The letter on the trolley was not to be found.)